ankylosing spondylitis and gouty arthritis which are muscle-skeletal disorders and these drugs are prescribed for limited number of days to allay pain and inflammation associated with these disorders. Manufacturers of these formulations have been asked to incorporate certain precautionary statemtnts to safeguard against any indiscriminate use.

Shortage of blood in the country

801. SHRI MUKHTIAR SINGH MALIK : Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news item which appeared in the Indian Express, dated the 10th July, 1989 to the effect that there is an acute shortage of Blood in the country ;

(b) If so, what are the reasons therefor ; and

(c) what steps are being taken by Government to meet the shortage of Blood ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI RAFIQUE ALAM):(a) The Government has seen the news item which appeared in the 'Indian Express' dated 10th July, 1989. The news items pertains to shortage of blood products and not with the blood itself.

(b) Recently, some blood products on testing were reported to be positive for HIV– anti bodies. Although these products may not be infectious yet, it was felt necessary to review the safety of all blood products manufactured in the country. An expert group under Director General of Health Services has recommended in March 1989 that all products of blood/placenta manufactured including those which have been withdrawn should be destroyed . Since the manufacturers had not tested each bleeding. In order to ensur safety of blood products, manufacturers are now required to test each bleeding, pooled plasma and the final product for freedom from HIV-anti-bodies. They are also required to adopt suitable manufacturing process which would ensure that the final products are free from viruses. The manufacturers of the blood products had to temporarily suspend the manufacture of drugs derived from the blood to incorporate the safety measures. Hence the reported shortage of blood products in the country.

(c) In order to improve the availabilty of blood products, Government have liberaised the procedures for import and also exempted import duty on them. Blood products have now been brought under the Open General Licence system and all whole-salers can directly import blood products fot stock and sale. Similarly, hospitals, medical practioners and individuals can also directly import blood products for use. It is expected the indigenous production will be resumed a period of six months.

Pending Applications for Telephone Connection in Metropolitan Cities

802. SHRI MUKHTIAR SINGH MALIK : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) what is the number of applications for telephone connections pending in each metropolitan cities of the country as on date ;

(b) whether Government have chalked out any programme to meet the demand for telephone connections ; and